



**2017 NWSA Annual Conference:
40 YEARS AFTER COMBAHEE: Feminist Scholars and
Activists Engage the Movement for Black Lives**

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: This past June she received Harriet Tubman lifetime achievement award from the African-American policy forum, that I will allude to a bit later.

Demita Frazier:

Founding member and coauthor of the statement. An unrepentant -- these are her words unrepentant black feminist social just activist, thought leader, writer, and teacher.

She has worked tirelessly on issues of reproductive rights, domestic violence, endangered children, food security in poor and working class communities and ending heteropatriarchal hegemony. Margo Ozakawa-Rey, also a member of the Combahee River Collective, is presently fielding graduate university professor.

She has also held the distinguished chair in women's leadership at Mills's college and the Jane Wilson Irving chair at women's studies at Hamilton college her primary areas of research and activism are militarism, armed conflict.

And violence against women.

She is a founding member of the afroAsian relations council, east Asia U.S., women's network, against militarism, and the institute for multiracial justice and the international network of women against militarism.

She is coeditor of activist scholarship, antiracism feminism and social change and women's lives multicultural perspectives.

Mary Hooks: Black, lesbian, feminist, mother, organizer.

Is codirector of SONG. Southerners on new ground.

A political home for LGBTQ liberation across lines of race, class, ability, age, culture, gender and sexuality in the south.

SONG focuses on leadership development coalition and alliance building, intersectional analysis, and organizing.

Charlene Carruthers is a black queer feminist community organizer, and writer who currently is the national director of the black youth project 100.

[APPLAUSE]

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: And activist member led organization of black 18 to 35-year-olds, dedicated to creating justice and freedom for all black people, no matter where they are.

She was recently recognized, as one of the top ten most influential Americans in the root 100. Kimberlé Crenshaw is professor of law at UCLA and Columbia law school.

And founder and executive director of the African-American policy forum. A gender and race justice think tank on whose board I am pleased to serve.

She is also founder and executive director of the center for intersectionality, and social policy studies at Columbia law school.

She spear-headed the why we can't wait campaign and the #sayhername campaign.

Which called tension to police brutality against black women and

CART FILE

girls.

She is coeditor of critical race theory, key documents that shape the movement.

And was influential in the drafting of the equality clause in the South African constitution.

Her ground breaking work on intersectionality is taught throughout the academy.

And links her directly to the Combahee River Collective.

On June 2nd, 1863, the now legend Harriet Tubman freed more than 150 enslaved person in the only military campaign in the U.S. executed by a woman. At the Combahee river in the port royal section of South Carolina.

The Combahee River Collective is the name of the document that the collective chose. And I'm going to quote from Barbara Smith right now.

As a way of talking about ourselves, being on a continuum of black struggle a black women's struggle, the Combahee River Collective was a black queer feminist organization, active in Boston from 1974 to 1980.

They had many, many retreats. The first one of which was in 1977, in Massachusetts. Rather than narrate and get in trouble, the history of Combahee --

[LAUGHTER]

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: I want to read a few sentences, from the manifesto that captured the minds and hearts of feminists and other social justice Warriors, here and around the globe.

Including many of us gathered in this room.

We are a collective of black feminists who have been meeting together since 1974.

During that time, we have been involved in the process of defining and clarifying our politics. While, at the same time, doing political work within our own group, and in coalition with other progressive organizations and movements.

The most general statement of our politics, at the present time, would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual heterosexual and class oppression, based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression, are interlocking.

The synthesis of these oppressions, creates the conditions of our lives.

As black women, we see black feminism as a logical, political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all Women of Color face, 1977.

The collective theorized that the liberation of all oppressed people necessitates the destruction of the political and economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy.

[APPLAUSE]

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: The statement was first published in Zillah Eisenstein's book. The case for socialist feminism in 1978.

I want to just following Kimberlé's example I want to say the names.

I want to say the names of the collective members.

FROM THE FLOOR: Yes!



BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: Cessie Alphonso. Cheryl Clark.
Demita Frazier! Gloria Hull, Chirlane McCray Eleanor Johnson Audre
Lorde. Margo Ozakawa-Rey, Sharon Richie. Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith.
[APPLAUSE]

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: So will the panelists come and join me?
[Cheers and applause]
[standing ovation]

>> So this is the format I'm going to try to manage. We're going to start with a few questions, and then we're going to have a conversation among us, or not me, among them -- based on the comments that they've made, and then we're going to turn the -- turn it over to the audience and we're going to do that around 1:50 so we'll have a good Q & A period. So I want to just start with the first question to our three Combahee River Collective members.

As a member, what 40 years later, 40 years later -- would you like to share with this audience today?

>> All righty. Then.

Well, first of all, I want to thank the national women's studies association.

Barbara Ransby, Ransby, Premilla Kira Allison for make all of this possible I want to thank you this is an incredible exciting moment particularly for those who were a part of the Combahee River Collective.

And when I was walking around near the registration area, and the ballrooms, I saw this morning -- I had been by there before I saw this arch that said, "Combahee River Collective, 40 years later, blah, blah, blah" and I asked got a little verklempt because I was just, like, really, really?

I mean, boss it was -- it's like the arc de triomphe or something it was wonderful so I want to say that I probably am saying that for all of us whether we were in Combahee or not.

So what I would most like people to know about Combahee, is that it was about practice.

That is political practice, political organizing.

Because we wrote the statement our words, have reached many, many people, our -- our thoughts, our politics our perspectives have reached many, many people.

And they hang on to the words; they use them in many, many different ways. I think they have had a lot of power, but I think that when people look at that statement, I think that they should really take into account what we were about was getting the job done. And that's a -- not was. That is the job of revolutionary change. So that's the main thing I would like you all to know. And I also feel that the reason that the Combahee River Collective statement has such lasting staying power, is because of the fact that we were -- are radicals we were radicals. We are part of the left.

We were anticapitalist, and socialist and that's why to me people can still read it to this day it was not about identity politics the -- I'm talking about you -- some people like that have defined it that is completely not even relevant. If you have seen -- if you have seen his



book, somebody gave me a copy of his book last week because there's no way I was going to buy it, but if you have seen his book he has three chapters second chapter of the book is pseudopolitics.

And he has a quote from Combahee to illustrate pseudo politics as I said we're about something else.

[APPLAUSE]

>> I just love being us. I do.

All right. Please get closer.

First of all, I want to dedicate my remarks to the women who aren't here.

And whether it's by virtue of life lost, or just by virtue of not being present their presence is here because if one thing was really true about Combahee, the statement that we crafted and we wrote, represented the input of the brilliance of many black women who came through Combahee. The ideas were core for us because we were truly committed as black intellectuals and, by the way, proud intellectuals from a long history of African-American brilliance. Let's just say it. We were not brand-new. We were not the first. We represent a long stream of which many branches are sitting in this audience.

So what would I say about that time?

Dedicating -- again, dedicating my remarks to people who aren't here whose voices might not be heard. One of the most important things for me as a person who was coming out of a long -- seems kind of strange to say this but I became a political activist when I was 14 so by the time I got to Combahee, still on fire, met other fiery types.

I had been at it for a minute. What was wonderful about Combahee, was the opportunity for us, to be uncensored in our radical ideology, to have a place where we could craft and do what Barbara Ransby freedom-making, that's a phrase that's going to be with me forever. Because that's what we were actually doing. Was crafting freedom for ourselves, and every other marginalized person.

Crafting ideology that responded to our material circumstances.

I also want to say one of the things that's really amazing about the statement, is I reread it, recently, you know, you go many years without necessarily reading it. I haven't taught it in 30 years.

When I reread it, it says refreshingly irreverent and problematic as it always was and I love that.

[LAUGHTER]

>> -- I know insurrectionist nature of black feminism we're about shaking the jar. We're about up ending expectations we're about, actually, again, freedom-making.

Unbelievable! So I also want to say to you, one of the things that's really important to me, is that we make the connection between our past, and the present.

I said something several years ago, I'm not a nostalgic person I'm more interested in what's happening right now. I give us all the honor in the world for what we created but you younger people, represent the fresh



water the sweet water. We're the salty water so I want us to --

[LAUGHTER]

>> You don't know how salty we really are I'm acting with restraint, aren't I? But in truth my image is always about where the sweet water and the salty water meet.

In the wetlands, which is the most vital ecosystem we have.

And where those ideas mix and mingle, and create something quite insurrectionist. So....

[APPLAUSE]

>> I echo all my comrades' words. Thank you. Oh --

Okay. I just wanted to ask you if you all notice any kind of structural inequality here up here -- look, I can't touch my legs.

[LAUGHTER]

>> That's structural.

So, you know, I have to sit like this (indicating).

Anyway. Structural inequalities happen in all kinds of ways.

But anyway, first of all, I want to just bring, professor Anita Hill into this room given everything that's going on right now around all the sexual harassment, she was the black woman...

[APPLAUSE]

>> Who brought it into the public arena.

I also want to bring in Betita Martinez and Maria Varela. And Eri Cochiamia [phonetic], who were down with the black struggle they personified what it means for Black Lives. Ethical solidarity I want to read you a quote from grace lee bogs she says we never know how our small activities will affect others through the invisible fabric of our connectedness. In this exquisitely connected world it's never a question of critical mass. It's always about critical connections. And I think the critical connections is what helped -- what made Combahee what it is.

And I want to talk about the connections to the black feminists who came long before, such as Sojourner truth. Harriet Tubman Frances EW harper ida B wells, Barnett, Mary Church Terrell and thousands upon thousands unknown quote from our statement.

And our contemporaries like Angela Davis who we also quoted in the statement.

Our connections to one another, from meeting in living rooms to the first organizing retreat in Massachusetts, Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith.

Sherlaine McCray. Helen Stuart and Mercedes Thompkins -- and Sharon -- can't remember -- Sharon borg [[phonetic]] different Sharon. There were several Sharons who came through and we were also connected to community organizations.

Like women, incorporated, in Roxbury and activism in Dorchester, Jamaica Queens and neighborhoods in Boston ON issues for violence against women and sterilization abuse to school desegregation to people like Marlene Stevens and her organization crisis that was a member of the coalition for women's safety, which was in Boston, and the support group for women -- support group women's safety, which was in Cambridge and



Somerville mostly white women.

And that group took the lead of the coalition when we were dealing with the -- the murders of 13 women, black women.

Zillah Eisenstein who published the statement to women studies and plaque studies professors who assign the statement as required readings, and if -- if the statement resonated with you all, right? If it resonated with you all in any way what was the yearning, the longing in you that the statement kind of touched?

We'd like you to think about that.

And finally, it's such an honor -- and so humbling at the same time, to be recognized in the ways we have this weekend. And I want to quote from our statement. We reject pedestals. Queenhood and walking 10 paces behind.

To be recognized, as human, levelly human is enough. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: Our second question.

This is really hard to -- you know, I'll do this...

(After perusing document) What was one key idea in the Combahee statement or from the Combahee statement that fundamentally shaped your work? And in what ways?

>> Okay. Hey, you-all!

Hey. It is such an honor and -- I don't think privilege -- privilege is the right word to use.

But I feel like I'm in sacred space right now.

Because of -- of -- because of you-all, and because of everyone that is here, and I am deeply, deeply grateful for Dr. Barbara Ransby and her leadership.

[APPLAUSE]

>> And the intervention that you're making Barbara with this entire conference. I see you because you're an organizer and I know what you're doing.

[LAUGHTER]

>> I see it.

And -- and thank you, because I -- I've said this before, but Dr. Ransby is, yes, a scholar, yes, a historian and she is also an organizer's organizer and she is organizing us all right now, in this room and so thank you for that.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

>> So, I am not a traditionally religious person I'm just not.

I dipped and dabbed into various faith traditions.

And it was, actually, black feminism where I first found my spiritual and political home. All right and to sit on this stage, today, and in this room, with who I consider to be the primary and main architects of that political and spiritual home, is humbling. And to hear, Dr. Guy-Sheftal

say the names of the people who are a part of the collective, I couldn't keep myself together because this is honoring of you-all and it is -- you are more than worthy of that honor.

More than worthy of it.

[APPLAUSE]

>> And so, as -- as an organizer, who is doing this work in this particular moment, and in the past, I guess over a dozen years since I've been in movement work, I may look a little younger than I actually am. The piece in particular that stands out for me in the statement that I want to share, it begins with...

This focusing upon our oppression our own oppression, is embodied in the concept of identity politics. We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity and if black women were free it would mean that everyone else would have to be free. Since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all systems of oppression.

Right?

So let that sit with you, let that sit with all of us if they said this in 1977 and we're still arguing about the value of developing politics and political commitments from our own lived experiences today.

And what I hope to -- to dive more into in this conversation, and throughout the weekend, is that in taking up, political commitments that are rooted in our lived experiences right? And not just political commitments that are liberal or progressive for progressive' sake but those that are radical, they hold the most liberatory potential or the potential for the most liberatory politics that we will ever see in this world.

And that is the work of the Combahee River Collective.

Yes, it's within the statement but it is also in the organizing right? It is in their organizing and the work that they continue to do today. They didn't stop in 1977 you-all.

They didn't stop. And it it is up to us in the room to say hey, identity politics, actually, have been exercised through the lens and the practices of white supremacists of white nationalists it won the 2016 presidential election it is winning in state houses across this country and one could argue across the world.

But it is when black radical feminists who are socialists and many communists shout out to Keeanga. Far left, right? Take up politics that are grounded in the commitment the collective liberation is possible for me I'm going to sit with that statement as my sacred text as my Bible as my Qur 'an, as my Baghadavita because that's how deep it is for me that's why I carry it damn near everywhere that I go it is not for us to think and believe in the statement faith without works is dead.

And so.... if we want to take --

FROM THE FLOOR: Come on Charlene.

>> So LET this conversation and this conference be an invitation to nonbelievers if you are not a believer in black radical feminism this is an invitation the doors are open you-all, the doors are open. Right?

And.... and you are a believer, and you are a believer let us be

shepherds, let us be shepherds for people and to this invitation and shepherds into this space in ways where we can be transformed and where we're all allowed to live within our full dignity.

So thanks.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Give me a minute you-all. My word. Shit. That's all right. That's all right. Just wanted to, first of all, start off by saying thank you. Thank you so much for having me here, so grateful for everybody who made it here, everybody on the panel, you-all, I just want to pass the water honey, I ain't got to say nothing. I just, you know, as long as I'm in the atmosphere so just deeply grateful to be here.

And I would say, you know, I was trying to pick out, like, the best quote, like, oh, which one?

But real talk, it's the part about the work. Hands-down the part about the work. And I say that because, I would say I was introduced to the manifestations of the statement through a woman in a bar.

FROM THE FLOOR: Yes!

[LAUGHTER]

>> Through a woman in a bar:

[APPLAUSE]

>> And I was in a bar -- I'm going to tell you a little bit about my business -- I was in a bar full of black women where most good things happen.

[LAUGHTER]

>> And I was being a wing man, for my homey.

Who thought Paris hatcher was all that and a bag of chips so I went to do a little prevetting you know what I mean, so when I was, like, so what do you do?

Just me all -- unpoliticized. Paris hatcher said she was trying to stop the shackling of black women while giving birth in prison.

And it blew my mind. Blew my mind and literally changed my life. One that it was happening; and then that she actually was doing something about it.

Floored me.

And the story goes on, she introduces me to SONG.

SONG becomes my political home. Rooted in the politic.

And ever since then it's always been -- and I have been trained up in what is the work what does it look like? What is the work how do we take the politic that we believe it embody in the work we do. So I am deeply grateful because there is evidence of how this thing can work.

You know, and I think one of the things for SONG and for -- for what it meant for myself, one of the things that we have always been in struggle around is how do we not take such brilliant writing that -- that go -- not just about the identity politics. I remember one of the founders of SONG saying that we struggle to try to make sure folks -- it ain't just about how many labels you can put on yourself you-all. It goes beyond that. It has to be more. It has to be about how we approach and strategize how our



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strategies are thinking about the interlocking oppressions that are at play and the systems of oppression that are at play the intersectional, coalitions and alliances like all of those things need to mirror our understanding of how systems are -- are -- are at play and also our lives, are deeply interconnected to me it's all about the practice and the work.

So I'm deeply grateful for having an example and for seeing the manifestations of that, and Paris being a shepherd, right?

Thanks, girl!

For being a shepherd of that message and it literally saved my life. Saved my life.

So... that's what I'll say.

[APPLAUSE]

>> So many things to say.

First, I just have to confess my own fan girl moment.

[LAUGHTER]

>> And I've been having it -- I've been having it with Barbara. I'm kind of getting there, but now to meet two more of the women who shaped the -- the work that we all do in this contemporary moment.

It's -- it's just a gift and I want to thank, of course, Barbara, and Beverly for including a lawyer in this conversation. So it's really a thrill for me.

I also want to take this moment to make a -- a confession.

So when I was in graduate school, university of Wisconsin, in the -- in the mid-'80s, we had a little study group, and we were reading anything we could get our hands on.

And, you know, the -- the bench was not deep. There wasn't a lot of published stuff. Right? So there was the -- the statement.

There was -- there was also, this real short run book called "conditions 5".

[APPLAUSE]

>> And we -- we were a collective of about eight graduate students and there was only one copy of this book.

And we would pass it around pass it around, and a lot of times, the book would just get lost, because somebody was hoarding the book and everybody would go, "Who's got the book? Who's got the book?" I had the book.

[LAUGHTER]

>> I still have the book.

[LAUGHTER]

>> So any of you-all who are here, I'm sorry it was me. I -- I still have it.

For those of you who haven't seen it you-all might remember prince had the black album and everybody wanted to get that album conditions 5 was, like, that, too, it was the one that everybody really wanted to get.

There's so much in the work that -- that these -- these heroes of ours have done it's hard for me to choose but I'm going to force to myself -- choose to -- one of the them is building on the -- the selection



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that Charlene mentioned and the piece of -- I mean, all of it but the piece of it, we're the only ones that we can rely on to liberate ourselves we're the ones that are going to care about our issues we're the ones that we have to look to, to articulate the specificities of our lives and to demand accountability for those specificities. That was an amazing moment because I was still kind of thinking, aren't we all in -- aren't we a "we" so when we're talking about antiracism and I came out of a black nation nationalist I thought we meant me to when our issues weren't showing up I couldn't figure it out what does it mean to talk about we and we're told -- but for now, just step back for a minute and it was the same with respect to feminism.

And it was the same with respect to radical class politics.

So in trying to figure out what was happening, you get fragments of an ability to kind of see something and then you kind of lose it until you find something that explains for you, why it is that being all the things you are meant that you could never take we for granted in conventional politics.

That stuck with me. And it stuck with me these were going to be contested spaces; that if you articulate a politic that is seen as running counter to the logics of the group that you're in, you're going to be labeled. You're going to be marginalizes you're going to be punished you have to recognize that is part of the game and embrace that as part of the work that you do.

So that was incredible -- incredibly inspiring for me.

Because it told me not just when I'm in spaces, with other people of color or when you mean in spaces with women but where I was knowing going which was law school where there were: A, very few people of color; B, very few women; and, C, very few radical thinkers that the sensibility that is reflected by the idea of over lapping, the idea of synthesis -- has to be the thing that tells you that in every class you're in, there's a part of a conversation that's going to erase you in every law that you're talking about. There's going to be a part of that, that erases you.

So it helped me, at that moment, to think a black fitness project in the law?

Is marking all the ways that black women get erased. Marking all the ways that law makes it not possible for black win to be marginalized it actually writes our marginalization into its own text the process of unpacking that, dismantling that -- that is the political work of black feminism. That's the work that Combahee helped me do.

[APPLAUSE]

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: A little bit about the future. All of you, so here is my -- my last question on that.

What might be an important way -- all of you -- to advance the theory delineated by CRC 40 years ago as we look to the future?

So how might we advance the work of Combahee as we think about this moment and the future? You can -- you can just -- we can start anywhere.

>> Well, as I said, in my first remarks, what really characterized



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Combahee, is the political practice.

And the fact that we're having this dialogue at the national women's study's association conference is really fascinating to me, because even though 40 years ago, I was involved in both, women's studies and teaching, and in building block feminism, they were kind of two different parts of my life.

That I saw aligned but didn't necessarily meet.

But back then, and for every moment since then, we've always tried to push people not just to think about these things but to get involved. When I go and visit campuses, I always want to happen what's happening in the town or the city where this campus is?

That, you, as somebody with all your talent, all of your resources, all of your analytical abilities -- could actually help to make different and to make better if you would just get off of this -- expansive green and go down where the people are living, and -- and find out what they know and find out how you might indeed be able to engage with that.

This is not about theory by itself. It just is not. That's empty. Just as Charlene said. Theory without practice.

Another thing -- and I don't think I have to say this so much to this crowd; but one of the things that made our work deep, is that we were always reading. And trying to find out more stuff.

We didn't think we were done or finished and we certainly didn't address knowledge in 140-character, you know, bites, because that wasn't a thing. 280 now. Whatever still brief, 280 brief, still.

[LAUGHTER]

>> And the thing is -- I don't know if I have 280 yet. Does everybody have it now?

>> I don't.

>> Okay. Anyway. Because I loved to tweet people and not talking about tweeting but tweeting is not where you get political depth from.

You have to go somewhere, and read something sometime talk to some people but the people -- people who are experts have a lot of expertise, are the people who are living with and under the oppressions that we are trying to address.

So all I can say is, like, we're in a trick bag. We're in one of the biggest trick bags that this nation has ever faced.

When that creature was elected last November...

[LAUGHTER]

>> I try not to say his name.

I -- I thought of a new one yesterday, which I tweeted which is Beelzebub in chief but when he was elected or at least appointed by the electoral college -- I said -- and I think this is true.

[APPLAUSE]

>> That we have not had this kind of crisis in the United States since the Civil War and, also, since the early 20th century more since the early 20th century because since the early 20th century white male patriarchs. White supremacists et cetera who ran for the presidency who won the presidency they could not run on an explicitly white supremacist platform



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now, that's like early 19 hundreds, you know, you just couldn't do it.

Goldwater could not do it George Wallace could not do it. It just could not be done. LBJ you could be a big racist the Kennedys they weren't so down with the civil rights movement until pressure -- the thing is you couldn't run on that. Now, it's 2016 and 2017, and not only could you run on it, explicitly, you could win on it and look at the chaos and the horror that has been unleashed since that time.

I see -- and I was saying this to someone just yesterday -- I see the current resurgence of interest in the organizing of radical Women of Color, I see it as perfectly timed to the crisis that not just the United States faces, but that the globe faces.

Because chaos here is being exported at a fast clip.

And I just think that we have so much work to do. I'm involved in the poor people's campaign keep your eyes and ears open for that -- it will be announced on December the 4th and then starting on mother's day and going to the summer Solstice 40 days of civil disobedience in many, many state capitals all over the United States. And that's -- bishop William barber.

[APPLAUSE]

>> And reverend Elizabeth Harris and many others. That's what I'm putting my time into these days because it's about economic exploitation.

It's about a people's movement. There's always something to be done. So that's what I would say. That's how you keep the tradition strong.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Thank you. That's the truth.

Um... and to you -- you took us to church already. So -- oh, we're the mothers of the church, right?

>> Do people know.

>> Do people know what the mothers of the church are? We're not wearing white today, but...

[LAUGHTER] I'm being restrained as Barbara knows and Margo too I'm not making a lot of jokes today I'll be serious.

A couple of things -- I'm really having to struggle with it, though, so here's what I'd like to say about where I find us now.

I'm still intrigued, and as I continue my activism, I'm intrigued by what we're not doing with one another as black women.

I'm very, very curious, because I'm not quite certain -- I haven't done enough gathering of data to really see, yet, how we weave these disparate ideas about what constitutes feminism.

And black feminism.

Past and present.

I just mentioned to some of young sisters that I just listened to all of lemonade... hey, I'm not mad at her although, you know, she can use that bet on a few people.

For real.

However, what I think is really important to notice is that as we talk about black feminism today, the way it's morphed and the way it's gotten away from -- and have been modified, and been, you know, suffering



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the predation of late stage capitalism, we struggling to try to say what's radical black feminism and what's described as black feminism.

Constantly on my Facebook what's my favorite hash tag hash tag you don't know what that word means, and it's disturbing.

We quo language evolves but the way language is being manipulated and toyed with right now we know what's up.

So I'm very curious, as to how we're going to continue this black feminist project going forward where we're at a stage of development right now where there's a lot of... manipulation with a negative intent.

Words like identity politics where people are taking them -- person -- never even heard the person who wrote that book. The ways in which powerful concepts deeply powerful concepts, are being manipulated and sold back to us.

We haven't quite figured -- we haven't quite figured out how to seize the narrative.

How to create an energy that makes it impossible for it to be misdefined.

This doesn't require money, so I'm thinking about all the ways in which we can do things that don't require we be participants in the late stage capitalist -- that we're in. I also want to say -- a couple of things always intrigued me how internally how we function; how we actually -- by the way, our culture is not our new. Call our culture is old. Real old and I remember back in the '70s, reading articles in publications, which were beef between this one and that one, like, why don't you call her? And stop taking up trees and paper, hiding behind, you know, theory when all it is your dash you don't like her.

And she -- you want her to like you, but, you know, whatever.

Am I right?

So... those are my interests right now because -- the third thing I will say and this will come up later. I want to one of the early NWSA conferences.

In the very early era, and I didn't go after that. Because my issue, at that point, was I wanted white feminism to be as animated, and as surging about racism, as we were about feminism.

And granted, I have all sorts of allies, women in my life, white women who are, you know, throw up their hoody and take their earrings for us. Small number, but they're there.

I've known them. Some of them are too old to even fight.

My point is, there has been -- we were talking about this earlier -- whenever they talk about the 53% of white women who voted for the current regime I never use that thing the leader of the current regime, they never -- they always get excited 53% of women no 53% of white women who voted, they don't say fifty-three % of feminist white feminists who voted so, again, the manipulation of the -- the manipulation is just unbelievable.

However, for the women who are white women, who have not dedicated their lives to eradicating white supremacy that's my charge to you in every way and every day, in every way and every day, it is a muscle memory issue.

It's a constant engagement with the -- the material reality that once



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you see it, you can't not see it.

So what I'm expecting and hoping, going forward, is that we continue to work as African-American women, on the large project, of freeing the world.

And that white women, especially white feminists, join us in that enterprise by doing the work, the antiwhite supremacist work in the white world.

[APPLAUSE]

>> We've never had a situation where we had so many microphones. It's kind of exciting.

[LAUGHTER]

>> So, I think we, people in this room, many people in this room, I think it's time for us to learn, from people outside the U.S.A.

[APPLAUSE]

>> And I'm thinking of people like Nydia Costas [phonetic] called Techo Y vida who is doing work after the earthquake who are talking about not just rebuilding houses, but rebuilding identities, rebuilding visions, you know, all of that differentiate I'm also thinking about Suzio, who is one of the founders of Okinawa women act against military violence who are struggling in Okinawa, for decades to get rid of U.S. bases in light of all the mess of -- the U.S. bases are creating there I also think about learning from other places things like solidarity economy and the blue economy. I want to invoke here Ann Braden remember her? The fabulous white antiracist fitness and she says in every age no matter how cruel the oppression carried on by those in power, there have been those who struggled for a different world.

I believe this is the genius of humankind. The thing that makes us half divine, the fact that some human beings can envision a world that has never existed.

And I'm so thrilled that next year's NWSA is going to be all about imagining and -- and -- and envisioning.

And then I -- I thought about several questions, actually,.

And one of those, is, what would happen if we thought about the conditions we're facing in the U.S. thinking about them as this kind of triplet of neoliberalism religious fundamentalism, and militarism?

As the big frame.

I also thought about questions like what happens when the opposition becomes the state? And that could be faculty, becoming deans, and presidents.

It could be grassroots activists becoming elected politicians, or it could be somebody in the opposition, like, I'm thinking -- in the most painful way, somebody like Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar there's the genocide of the Rohingya people what does it mean when we on the left come into power? What would we need to change so that we don't end up re-creating the same mess that was handed to us? And this applies to post colonial state we see what's happening in Zimbabwe right now.

The other question, is thinking about feminist leadership, something



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that Angela, and Alicia talked about last night, and that is for me, I think feminist leadership fundamentally is about listening.

Right? Listening. And not just talking.

Another -- two other questions I have, is what is our vision -- and, again, I want to -- I'm so thrilled about NWSA next year -- what is your vision -- our vision of a just and sustainable world? Right? How do we have to think about development? Progress, and security to realize that vision?

And then, finally, what kind of human beings would we have to become to be able to create it and to sustain that world?

[APPLAUSE]

>> Ohh. Okay.

So I have two things.

And thinking about where we need to go from here and how do we uphold the legacy and the work the ongoing work; so, first, I believe that we have to do a retelling of the black radical tradition.

And what I mean by that, as -- it's both an intellectual intervention and also intervention in our organizing.

Because as an organizer for me or when I got into activism so much of what I was doing was rooted in the stories that I heard.

That people that I heard the strategies, so I'm not of the mind we need to add women add queer folks transfolks just for the sake of saying our names.

We need to add these -- we need to add this work and these stories in for the sake of strategic imperative.

To actually provide models for how we need to do our work. So when you look at the Combahee River Collective, we're not just reading that statement just because black women and black lesbians, wrote it.

But because the strategy that it lays out for us.

The vision that it lays out for us. So what would it mean that if how we thought about the black radical tradition how we thought about black radical feminism, started with a story of Marsha P Johnson.

What would it mean?

Right? So Marsha P Johnson if you all don't know who she is -- look at Gossett work amazing archival work documentary work, around Marsha P Johnson's story, and not only her work in -- being a catalyst for the stonewall rebellion and what we know -- how we think about the modern day LGBT rights movement she's also one of the cofounders of one of the earliest organizations for transgender rights in the world along with Sylvia Rivera. So what can we learn from the work that Marsha P Johnson and Sylvia Rivera did in New York City? Right? Yes, we should know about how beautiful Marsha was, and her beautiful floral crowns, and she was an amazing strategist. So that is our work as scholars and activists, to actually dig up those stories continue the work that plague feminists have been doing forever plague rewriting, the civil rights movement history we have to do that because when we are bringing up these baby organizers and activists what are the stories we're telling them? How they're thinking about movement building and if we don't tell them -- if we don't weave in the



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Marsha P Johnson all those people we miss so much, the second part for me, is how we can best continue to embody this work through taking up very clear political commitments to abolition.

That is the second thing we are in Baltimore right now. I don't know how many minutes away, was Korryn Gaines home Korryn Gaines was a young black woman who died while protecting her son, while S.W.A.T. agents entered her home and she had a weapon and in defense of herself and in defense of her son she was killed.

And so we will be remiss if we're at this conference in Baltimore right now we don't talk about this fight being for black mothers and black people like Korryn Gaines right? And so I'm sure many people heard last night from Dr. Davis and also Alicia about this imperative for us to not simply tear down the systems because, yes, we've got a lot of shit to tear down our charge is to take up the work of rebuilding alternatives of building alternatives and building new institutions to deal with conflicts and harm in radically different ways and it was black feminists who taught me to think about that. It's Miriam Cava [phonetic], who is in this room. Wasn't some random white feminist who told me about abolition. It was radical black feminists who thought me that. And so if you haven't read our prison is obsolete if you need a starter pack to learn about this, right? If we're about up ending these multiple systems of oppression interlocking oppressions if we're about that business, that in the carceral state how we deal with conflict and harm has got to be transformed and integral to our overall strategy and vision.

>> Can I just mention one thing Combahee did in addition to making visible the murder of those 13 women 12 of them was black one of them was white Combahee also advocated against police brutality that doesn't always get mentioned when we're thinking about Combahee.

>> There we go. I turned my mic off because I didn't want to be that person saying shit something under my breath. Here we go some of my thoughts I have check marks many of these you could probably hear later on tonight while I'm at the bar talking crazy.

But one of the things I think is deeply important is being able to be in intergenerational relationships with one another.

I think that, you know, as someone who oftentimes seen movements spaces come together, that we have to be more intentional about making sure that we are in relationships and intentionally building with folks that don't just think like us sound like us folks who got -- have come with the depth of time and I think that means a lot in terms of how it informs our work. I remember one of the first conversations I had with you Ms. Barbara when we were at -- I forget we were at we were having a conversation and I remember in that space, a lot of folks were grappling YO what did we do the murder of a transwoman is going down and I remember you talking about the work that you all were doing when black women were being killed in Boston.

And you-all's strategy and how you all went to the doors and you created a newsletter and -- and that -- I'm telling you I have been, like, blaring amplify -- like, you-all this is a winning strategy we can totally do this and without having that dialogue and a transferring of knowledge



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and strategy, you know, I think we still be grappling with, you know, ways in which we could be freeing ourselves, you know, like we have perfect examples.

I also, you know, I think that we have to be more bold and courageous. We have to be more bold more courageous than the right. We have to be more bold more courageous, than -- than Becky. We have to be more bold and courageous and -- and by doing that we're going to have to be willing to learn by doing, that we're not going to be able to sit in our brain tanks and think about, you know, the perfect strategy the perfect way to win we're actually just going to have to get out there and take those risks because with no shared risk there is no shared reward. And I think one of the things that always -- that is also coming to mind and you -- kind of touched on a little bit about white women addressing race -- racism right? And white feminist addressing racism I think we have to be clear about how we get into formation and be in alignment with each other.

I remember when we were -- when -- work was popping off, and we were in a -- 2015 give or take and we were struggling on the ground with white allies who were unwilling to take direction primarily from black queer transpeople who were on the front line making calls.

And literally we would have to, like, have separate meetings and having to organize them you're not iffing to do XYZ not iffing to come and establish a different march no you're not iffing to lead -- I mean, all the things. Right? And I remember saying that we have to, you know, white folks have to love black people more than you hate the state.

Right?

It ain't just about -- it ain't just about hating, you know what I mean. You have to love us more, because if so then your willingness to -- to take marching orders real talk -- to take marching orders and to also be willing to organize your folks with -- really different right now. It would look really different right now and that's the way I think we -- all of us, all of us regardless of color, regardless of gender -- all of us must embody a black feminist politic you don't have to have black to have this you don't have to borrow it but you ain't got to be black to have it you know what I mean. We all can be practicing that and those are some of the ways in which we do by taking and being bold being courageous the way you-all have shown us. So thank you for a beautiful example.

[APPLAUSE]

>> So I -- I think I'm going to just sing a couple of additional verses of the song we're singing it seems as though we're singing out of the same book and I actually want to build on what you were just saying about the work we want we see and we need, our allies to be doing.

Specifically, with respect to what we just saw in this last election so for example everybody been pointing out 53% of white women voted for the predator in chief.

[LAUGHTER]

>> I'll just let us think about that for a moment and think about why that seems so hawking to in reality white women haven't voted for a Demita since maybe Clinton and that was only barely, this is a long-term



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issue this isn't just this happened this time but what made us think it was going to be different we thought that because he was clearly shown to be a predator, that his predation against them, was going to count more than his white supremacy.

And that's been -- that's been a condition of black, white women's relationship throughout our history here.

So that has never changed.

Why are we still surprised about that? Right?

Partly, we're not telling these stories. So I completely agree that we have to be able to draw forward histories that have lawn been forgotten for various reasons now I'm going to go harder because there's another political history that we have not been honest to tell. And that is a political history within the black community around patriarchy. I'm going to say this --

[APPLAUSE]

>> I'm going to say that the conditions of the predator in chief's possibility were largely made possible by a reaction of African-Americans to the emergence of Anita hill, when Clarence Thomas was about to be confirmed, without a whole lot of support, until, until, until, it turned out that this -- that there was this allegation. Now, let me -- walk through and just say this.

I was part of her legal team.

We were in the Capitol together. We were fighting hard, fighting very hard, to sustain the criticism of him, so he would not be confirmed. The argument was that he was not a civil rights person.

He did not have a lot of support in the African-American community.

Those senators who voted for him, thinking that they were going to get black support for it, were mistaken. That was the argument that we were making then Anita hill comes forward. And what happens? I'll give you just a picture.

When we left the Capitol the first night of the testimony, we encountered a group of African-American women who had encircled the Capitol and they were singing a spiritual songs gospel, and they had T-shirts on and we thought, wonderful! The brigade has shown up. They're coming to support a sister.

Until we got up on them and we saw they were singing praise songs for Clarence Thomas and they were asking God to deliver him from this jezebel. Right?

Now, why is it important that I say this? Let me draw two more hooks.

Two conditions that made it possible, I think, for -- for the predator to win. Were the gutting of voting rights act.

And the gutting of campaign finance reform.

Those are five -- 4 vote the fifth vote was Clarence Thomas so when we start looking back and trying to figure out, how do certain things happen would have to be honest in telling some of those stories now, back to why so many people opposed Anita hill, saw her as a traitor here some of the things they said. Sexual harassment is not a black woman's thing. Black women know how to handle a man like that.



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Orlando Patterson wrote an op-ed in the New York Times basically saying precisely that.

That even if she was telling the technical truth, she was really lying because any black woman would know how to put Clarence Thomas in his place. This is what people were saying.

What were they not doing when they were saying that? A they weren't knowing.

That sexual harassment has been a condition of black women's work life since they got here.

[APPLAUSE]

>> They did not know that black women were the first plaintiffs in sexual harassment cases. They did not know that the legal theory that was built on our experiences has become the legal case of sexual harassment that were all talking about now that came from black women right?

They also didn't know that the fight against sexual violence has always been part of the antiracist struggle. They didn't know that the whole civil rights movement began with the efforts of black women to mobilize. They didn't know about the role of the Montgomery bus boycott and how women were the infrastructure behind that.

And they didn't know that one of the leaders of the Montgomery bus boycott who made that infrastructure possible was someone who got her start fighting against the sexual abuse of black women who was that Rosa Parks! So Rosa Parks didn't just become a member of the civil rights movement because her feet were tired the way people like to tell it. It's not even true that it was just she walked into this, as someone fighting racial justice without a gender lens. She was the ancestor of the work we do. She did have a gender analysis to her anti -- and we have intentionally forgotten that to not only the peril of communities of color, but to this entire nation.

So if you ask me what to do in the future, it is learning our past better. It is resisting those who say that's not our issue.

It is resisting those who want to marginalize all of the issues we represent because we should be waiting for trickle down justice, which I will talk about later.

[APPLAUSE]

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: Is this the end? We're going -- I'm going to not do what I was going to do we're going to have you line up on each side and I'm going to give you some little instructions from my panelists what we're going to do is take three questions at a time.

Rather than hear one by themselves. Take three questions at a time, and the panelists will figure out how to answer three questions at a time. Not everybody.

Okay. You want to say something Margo? I'm going to give them some more instructions. No speeches.

[LAUGHTER] the other -- the other thing that -- that the panelists asked me to say, is, please think a little bit deeply, before you just throw out a question about, about what you've heard here.

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About what you've heard.

In other words don't answer a question that has nothing to do with what anybody up here said. Okay?

All right. So... Margo is there anything else that I missed? Okay and then -- and then when we finish with it, when we finish with the Q & A toward the end, each of these amazing Warriors is going to bring closure by saying one last thing before we part.

So, I can't -- the other thing is, identify yourself just by name, not all of your credentials when you -- when you ask your question so we're going to take three on this side, and -- and then three on this side. I can't see anything; so first three people just ask -- your question.

FROM THE FLOOR: We have a group question.

My name is Taylor recent graduate of the university of Virginia.

Well, it's important for the context of the question.

University of Virginia very important, yes, so we were struck on when we were talking about how to infiltrate institutions, and the way that power works because while we were undergraduates we were researching among black college students as recent graduates we're kind of wondering how we can take on still fighting against that power at a university that we are no longer attending.

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: Is that the collective question? Second person. Now I can't see.

>> My name is Abigail. During so much depth in the academy and in black communities as someone who has lived in has survived and studies of black -- so many of its peculiarities my instinct is to create a safe space to soak up acidic influences of dying things but I don't think there is a safe space the building is burning us or the building is earn being so what are your thoughts on breaking free from this paradox?

>> My name is Nat. My question focuses on the second-to-last paragraph of the collective statement.

And reflects back on the trickle down justice comment from professor Crenshaw.

In the statement, you say in the practice of our politics we do not believe that the end always justify the means many reactionary destructive acts have been done in the name of achieving correct political goals.

As feminist we do not want to miss over people in the name of politics. In this moment, how do we set the limit? How do we know when we've gone too far, or if we have not gone far enough?

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: Okay so Barbara wants to answer the last question -- there was a question about university politics and there was a question about black death. Did I hear that correctly Barbara.

>>BARBARA Smith: Oh. --

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: Why don't you repeat.

BARBARA Smith: From what I understood, the question was about we had made a statement about we do not mess over people in the name of politics it was about an ethical perspective, about having some ethical values around how we did our political work, because we are being exposed, to other political formations, that were primarily male-led, that really didn't care about how people were living, and how people could be hurt and the



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context of righteous supposedly righteous struggle.

So that's what -- it's a second to the last paragraph of the Combahee River Collective's statement. Us saying that the means do not justify the ends.

Et cetera. That you have to have, you know, some kind of ethical perspective. So all I wanted to say about that is that you have to have a series of principles. You have to have a deep core of principles that you probably should have gotten at home.

[LAUGHTER]

>>BARBARA Smith: Because I didn't learn that kind of thing anywhere except for at home.

If you don't feel like if you feel like your principles are shaky then the other -- I'm sure homes that you can access, when you find out what are people's right relationship with the world and other humans?

The question was also framed as how do we know when -- how do we know when we've gone too far and how do we know when we haven't gone far enough?

My feeling, about how people interact down here on earth, is that you're not supposed to do harm.

You're not -- you're not supposed to do violence.

You're supposed to think about if I was in that situation, how would I feel if...

And one of the beauties to me of feminism in general and of black feminism of the kind that we practice in particular, is that we try to take those things into account.

Running roughshod over people's communities, and over their concerns, their feelings their hearts, their right to have a peaceful environment and life -- we see some of that.

Like, should I say -- Antifa -- those people get on my nerves so bad.

Because it's all in their heads. It's, like, they read a comic book, you know, and the comic book said go out there and tear up people's communities create a lot of chaos a lot of danger for people who have, like, one millionth of the privilege you have because you can get away of acting a fool in front of the police or in front of the -- you can get away with it but those people who live in those communities, we can't get away with them. But they don't care about that.

They don't care about that. I maybe me painting with a broad brush but the thing is we've seen it before in other kinds of contexts.

That people who don't have to be concerned about how do I make it day-to-day just make it on a basic level of bodily preservation, doing stuff in the name of being revolutionaries that's absolutely unacceptable and reprehensible.

So if you don't have those deep core beliefs those deep principles you may make mistakes but there are some guidelines that you can read -- probably almost anything by a conscious black woman will help you to have those principles.

[APPLAUSE]

>> I want to respond and I can dispatch with this early this was -- from the people who talked about university of Virginia and what



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you can do to effect change in an environment that you feel bruised, and -- that was untoward, toward you.

Don't give them any money.

As an alum.

Write active letters saying you're not getting my money I'm talking to 20 other people and you're not getting your money until you deal with the following. Because one of the things about these institutions as somebody who has worked with college presidents, deans -- all sorts -- all sorts of administrators -- the reality in the educational industrial complex as we know it now, is that no one who has a serious job in that environment is interested in revolution or change.

Am I right?

And because the nature of -- of these institutions, whether they say it or not, typically, are devoted to the elite enterprise, and maintaining a kind of control over the way in which knowledge is transmitted, who gets to learn and et cetera. I think what I would say to you is, like, you know, be an insurrectionist while you're there gather your data and observe the behaviors of the people who have the power.

Increase your ability to be a critical thinker and analyzing what they're doing.

And be ready to step in when required to support the ongoing struggles of the people who are still there. Students are there for four years or five or whatever you come and you go you're transient. It's the people who have to live in those institutions who you're going to look for, for creating any kind of change; and they are in a very tense golden handcuffs kind of relationship to the institutions.

So I -- as someone who has done significant work with all sorts from the elite to the community colleges, I can tell you that the investment in wholesale change in those institutions, require a kind of... leadership that you don't see very often.

And when you do see it, you know people don't last in those jobs. I have a tremendous respect -- and I'm blanking on her name because I think about her. Ruth -- oh, my God. Okay. She put the fishy foot browns feet to the fire, and did what she could for the time that she was there.

And created a movement to get these colleges and universities to think about looking at their role in the enslavement of African people and indigenous peoples. So that's a small step because you content do big steps with these institutions. It's not going to happen. They're invested.

So I'm going to leave it there and just say, learn what you can.

Don't give them money, and move on to create insurrection in the places where you would be most useful.

>> You may think -- you may think you don't have a lot of power or -- influence as alum, alumni, but believe me, you do.

Alum -- I -- I'm confused because I went to a women's college so I'm an alumna but anyway people who graduated from college all the people like that alumni you have a lot of power and the longer you're out the more power you have you need to identify who your allies are amongst those alumni groups there are people who graduated 30 years ago, 20 years ago, 40s years



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ago, whatever who when you tell them what the problems are they're going to say no, no, no not at my Alma Mater. Don't forget about that.

>> I just -- since we're talking about universities one thing I wanted to share is -- my concern that colleges and universities are the big battleground against the right. Happening right now today.

[APPLAUSE]

>> And it's -- it's a battle in which I'm not quite sure we can -- well, I know we can't -- count on our liberal allies to help us support, because it's coming -- in a package, that makes liberals ambivalent. It's being framed as free speech.

It's -- it's being -- and -- and -- and that message is going out to alums, who in turn, are withdrawing support unless, some of these crazy organizations, are allowed access, to campuses, now the accident that Charlottesville happened No. 1 we don't really remember as much as we should what a fight it took for us to get into these spaces. We tend to think that the real fight and the real bloody fight, was only out there.

And we forgot that people got killed over this stuff. Students got arrested imprisoned this was a huge fight and out of that fight came women's studies black studies queer studies this is a product of active political engagement about the terms of knowledge production so it's not an accident that when the right wing seized that -- all the whites that didn't vote for trump. Some of them had exposure and where did they have exposure? On college campuses? It's not an accident that they realized that this is ground zero in our ability to produce ideas politics, knowledge that challenge this craziness.

So we got to know they're common. We've got to know the first thing that's going to go is black studies, ethnic studies, women's studies, queer studies -- I think probably it's happening to people's campuses who are right here.

So -- building on how do -- how do we -- we fight back? I think of it as almost we do have to fight back and I think we have to make -- if we -- if we contribute it's got to be conditional. This money is available, only for these programs.

This money is available only for scholarships.

This money is only available if you show the university is connected to the communities that they're supposed to serve. If we don't pay attention to this, I think in ten years, 20 years, were not even going to be able to see, a space like this populated in this way.

The last thing I'll just throw out a resource. There's a great documentary, many of you might have seen it called agents of change.

And it tells the story of San Francisco state. And Cornell and draws it into the contemporary moment. If you haven't seen it, I highly recommend it.

What -- what they're talking about there, I think is what's going to be happening over the next decade.

>> Barbara, or -- you want -- okay. Oh, there was a -- there was a question about black death... I didn't quite understand the question.

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You -- you want to quickly -- because I'm -- you want to quickly say what you meant?

(Inaudible). (Away from the mic.)

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: I --

>> I think, you know, this question of safe space is a problematic one. It's not just institutions that aren't safe, you know, our families, our homes are some of the least safe spaces, particularly for women.

Right? And so, you know, what kinds of space do we need to create, whether it's in an institution or outside, but what do we actually mean by "safe," right? What are we talking about? I think -- for me, it's more helpful when we think about creating spaces where we struggle together.

Right? Because some of the people who heard us the most, are -- are, quote, our own peal, right? And we keep looking at the dominant institutions by doing that we give them too much power and going back to what Kimberlé said, before, is, you know, Anita Hill that was a classic example right? Of how we did it to ourselves.

And so I really ask you to rethink what you actually mean by "safety" or "safe spaces".

>> Yeah, we did a back and forth, myself, Robyn Kelly, for the Boston Review called black study black struggle. And encourage you to check that out. I disagree with Robyn a couple of times, and we agree in many points about like the value of maroon space in university and college -- on university and college campuses, how can you be in the university and not of the university is that even possible? And so there are bunch of different perspectives I agree with you Margo -- the idea of safe space and movement in these academic institution is a flawed concept to think we're going to walk into a room or the diversity center the LGBT center and it says sticker that says safe space and you think that's going to be safe don't set yourself up for the okeydoke and sets up people for liberalism. It sets folks up for disappointment. And it says -- doesn't set up a space oftentimes unless people decide to a space of struggle which is what we really need on these campuses.

>> Okay. Next three on this side, please.

>> I'm Rasheem. I have a question about black women as knowledge-producers.

And how to protect and safeguard against our intellectual property particularly when our knowledge terms and phrasings are allowed in spaces our physical bodies aren't allowed in and even more specifically to Kimberlé Crenshaw I'd like to hear from you some of the unintended directions you feel intersectionality has taken.

[APPLAUSE]

>> I would a question from a sister earlier in my panel who asked me, about feeling safe in black feminist spaces as a black woman where she feels like she's being judge constantly by other feminists about not being feminist enough or not having the right politic in terms of how she dresses her support of Cardi B and I just -- since we're in a black fitness space and thinking about creating solidarity for black women I'm just thinking about all the ways we judge each other and create divisiveness.

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>> My name is EVA. I'm sorry I go to Spelman College in Atlanta I'm an organizer around gentrification the longevity sustainability of HBCUs and other black sacred space my friends and I there were having the time of our lives being bold enough to imagine the system and the world we want to live in; but we're also suffering -- our mental health is deteriorating. It's hard to keep a job when you're getting locked up and hard to maintain a GPA when you're protesting.

My question is actually about money there is a black capitalist class that that could fund this entire revolution. But they are disconnected from the work going on the ground. How can I in the Spelman College, who can connect with Beyoncé and Carrie Washington, who can not only stop gentrification of the west end, but can buy the entire west end.

How do we build organizing capacity with the people who have the money to get it going? Thank you.

>> Women's studies students Spelman. Kim, do you want to start.

>> The question is whether I can stop. Let me see if I can say, like, a minute's worth.

I was -- I was minding my own business one day reading the newspaper.

And there was a story about a controversy at the march in Chicago, and I thought that's an interesting story I kept reading it and all of a sudden I saw my name in the middle of the story.

And then a link to -- another piece of that written about intersectionality with the frame of I'm glad -- I'm glad that the dyke march excluded the marchers with the -- with the Jewish stars because it shows the underlying anti-Semitism in intersectionality.

So then I started thinking okay what the heck is going on? And then I started reading one of my former criminal law professors, basically made the same argument.

And then -- and then it sort of seemed like it was, like, a chorus, right?

Of people basically saying, that if we have to -- if we want to figure out why so many young people on campuses, are moving away from the traditional politics around Israel, this is what you have to understand, to understand that.

Which is interesting.

What was also interesting is the backlash against that attack, which was really.... gratifying to see so many people who were willing to say wait a minute. You can't take away a framework that's been useful for us, to have struggles within our own communities.

So within communities, that are fighting, and are trying to figure out what their position is, with respect to things like Zionism, there are people who are fighting for -- LGBTQ rights. There are people who are fighting for people of color. There are women who are fighting.

So what was interesting, was both the -- the framework and then the push back, which told me a couple of things.

Intersectionality is traveling and doing a lot of work, outside of things that I -- I -- ever thought about imagined and that's how ideas, travel.

That's how Combahee travels. That's how bell hooks travels.

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Everybody's work actually gets taken up and you cannot -- and should not -- try to dictate determine, or comment in a critical way, about how people choose to apply the work.

Now, if they say that that's what you're doing, or if they try to say this is what you have said, then you are being hailed. And when you are being hailed you do have to respond. So for me when I see intersectionality traveling and sometimes particularly when it goes to Europe, it travels without us and they want it that way.

You know, like, you-all stay at the border. The ideas, yeah, that's -- that we could work with as long as we can take the black feminism out of it. We can take the black feminism out of it. We can really do interesting things with this stuff. I think -- calls it gentrification basically we like this stuff. We want to move into it. We believe don't really want to live with you in it.

That's the kind of -- kind of the problem. So I see the struggle for our ideas as the struggle for our communities. We can share them for sure.

But the idea that we don't have a place in the intellectual production and the political work, that we all have done, that's as much an exercise of power, and I would say racial power, as what's happening in our communities and we should fight it on precisely those terms.

>> I'd like to build on what -- what you just shared, Kimberlé, about, like, our rightful place in knowledge production so this is a gathering of scholars and activists.

Right?

And so I'm speaking especially to the activists and the community organizers in the room right now is we have a place in knowledge production.

I do not have a Ph. D. I might one day get one, but to be clear there are right now people in this room, who are theorizing and have theorized from our work, right? They have claimed our work.

They have said they have spear-headed things that we have done ourselves and because we're not in these spaces in the same way, we don't get to lay claim to our work.

In the same way just as much as black women's knowledge production is -- it travels without -- with -- in a different spirit into which the things birth and created so does the production and knowledge production of organizers and movements right? And so my call, my call to people, who see themselves more as scholars, and less -- less than -- and not activists or not organizers, is to do what exactly what's happening right here.

Build those relationships if -- Barbara -- when Dr. Ransby sends us something, she doesn't just send us a request as a scholar. It's because she's sending it as a comrade because we've sat in this room and we're in a relationship with each other. When you see something out in the world that is coming out of the movement for Black Lives know what goes into that and what has gone into that is a large number a deep amount of intellectual labor. We don't need folks who have not been on the streets folks who have not built relationships with us, to say, to write up policy agendas on their own.

To create entire institutes of race studies at American universities.

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There's one coming. If you're not in a relationship with people who are organizing and are on the ground doing this work, that's a problem.

We don't want another Derulo to happen. We don't want another predator story to be told out of academia we don't need about our narrative about our movement told that does not include because what will happy and what has happened not only is the story mistold but the intentions and the vision and the strategy that we've put forth is left out. It's left out and it makes me angry. It makes me angry and it makes me upset so I do believe that we can do something different in this room.

And so as we go throughout the rest of this weekend, know that activists and organizers are also experts and not just own lived experiences but of entire groups of entire histories and bodies of work.

[APPLAUSE]

>> I'd like to say something in response to the question concerning getting people who are megarich, you know, the millionaires and billionaires, among us, the handful, who are also black women. Are black men.

That that's not how change happens.

We have to have a class analysis and an understanding of how people do things, based upon what they see as their class interest.

So to say you have enough money it buy the entire -- is it the west end of -- of -- of Atlanta?

Yes, that is in theory, accurate.

But you do not have the consciousness to buy even perhaps two homes or three homes in that west end of Atlanta, because class interests follow -- or -- or determined by people's class position.

So it's an unusual, extremely wealthy person, who understands that despite the luck and, see, the difference between most black people, who have that level of wealth is that they did make it themselves. They did not inherit it.

So they have a different relationship than those who had inherited it.

But it's a very rare person who has great wealth who has a fundamental desire to overturn power, in society.

They just don't have it. It's not in their interest.

So instead of thinking about how can we get people who are really, really, really wealthy to purchase stability, for a neighborhood, our community what we have to figure out is how do we do the grassroots organizing so that the people who live in that neighborhood and the people who are concerned about what goes on in that community, make the situation so hot, so ungovernable, one of my favorite words, make so ungovernable that the power structure has to cede. They have to -- they have to say, okay, obviously, not working out. Perfect example. If you want an example.

What the hell is he talking about what I'm talking about is what Keeanga Yamahtta Taylor describes so well in her book from Black Lives Matter to black liberation one of the thing she does in the book is talk about the consciousness that drove the insurrections the urban



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insurrections of the 1960s. Some of us lived through all of those urban insurrections and those of us who are woke do not refer to them as riots because they were not riots they were political interventions around a system that was not serving the needs of the people who were living in that system. So I'm not saying you-all should organize urban insurrections. I'm not really saying that wink wink.

But the thing --

[LAUGHTER]

>> The thing is you do have examples of how people regular people got together -- not even necessarily even talking to each other and say okay this is not working.

We have to do something different.

People can come up with those conscious strategies.

So that's what I would suggest as opposed to try to get some of Beyoncé's money.

>> The question someone asked about black fitness spaces not always being safe or friendly because of judgmental stuff.

And -- how cross generational conversations about feminism can be held in a very -- in a productive way so can we just say a little bit about that and then we are really -- oh, having five minutes left.

[LAUGHTER]

>> I have a few thoughts about that. You know, I feel your friend. I'm a little scrappy, if one might have noticed.

And I say that because I didn't get politicized through the academia, one so my language and the way I talk and the way I speak about feminism might look different it others one of the things I know for sure is when I first got the language and read about it, and understood and got it I was, like, oh, they're talking about my aunt Lorraine, you're talking about Mokky, now all my people, and so I very much see myself, my Auntie all of my people, a lot of them well in the politic and the work so I think that is what is important right?

Is that regardless of how polished we are about the way we speak about it it's about how you live about it how you testify about it, and how you are able to claim it as your own; that's the magic of -- and the space that it opens up for all of us to step into that. And so I think, that, you know, and we're living in a really interesting age right now. You know what I mean, where it's totally cool to, like, you know, like, Cardi B I'm surprised I -- blast him when we want up in here you know what I mean that's start an anthem and question why. There isn't a perfect way in which we should show up to this work.

We are not perfect.

And nor -- that's not what it's asking us to be either but we're -- we're challenged to bring our full selves and for those who question how we do it or why we do it you know what I mean they actually embodied the politic in the way has been gifted to us I think that's what WE HAVE to do to stay true to that to bring our full selves and to continue -- to, you know, the legacy of this work and politic belongs to us. You know....



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[APPLAUSE]

>> Very quickly. Oh, okay.

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTAL: Go on and final statements from all of you as we have three minutes.

>> So I want to speak directly to how I have seen other black feminist treat people who are developing their politic or people who could use further development of their politic.

Right?

So one, it does -- it is not useful for us to talk about how well-read we are.

I've read more than you you're not well read enough so you can't battle with me bang with me you can't hang with me. That's not in the spirit -- that's counterrevolutionary, for us, to believe that in order for us to engage in intellectual struggle with someone, they have to be as well read as we are.

And we have a duty to show up differently with our people and on the other side of it as an organizer I was trained in some of the -- thread that was quite a bit antiintellectual, like, it was you shouldn't do these things theory doesn't matter. Just get out there and do the work so for activists and organizers Ella baker we can look to Ella bake answer her work and the importance of study. The importance of study is extremely important.

If read isn't quite your thing get in a circle and go line by line make a documentaries make it art make it panels make it forums but we have to be involved in deep study and for folks who can spend seven years to study people who have that opportunity what is your commitment to bringing our people into that work and inviting our people into that work?

[APPLAUSE]

>> Just one -- one final thing that people might want to say as we bring closure to this:

Yeah, one minute each, yeah. And everybody doesn't have to do it. We'll start with you, Kim. We'll start on that end.

>> So I'll start with just saying that I think some of the tension in black feminist spaces isn't all political. I think some tension is just tension that exists between black women that we have not worked out a way to deal with.

I sometimes I call it sister hate.

I sometimes think that there's pettiness among black women that gets overly theorized as political; how we determine the distinction between those two I think that's the challenge for us, because we know that we have to.

I would say that just in conclusion about where -- where I think we need to be going with our politics, I -- I'm going to talk this from Harriet Tubman.

Harriet spent the rest of her life trying to get her pension.

She was supposed to have gotten a pension both as a soldier, as someone

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who recruited, recruits for the union army. You were supposed to get a certain amount of money when she went to Combahee those people who signed up, each one of those bodies was supposed to be similar to that. She would be able to collect for, because she was a recruiter. She should have gotten paid as a nurse.

Even with a congressional sort of demand that she got paid she never got paid for what she did, as a soldier.

The only way she was able to survive at the end of her life -- and I have to say she actually ended up cleaning white women's homes after being this amazing scout, nurse, general, in the union army.

She ended up cleaning white women's homes. The only way that she got a pension, was because later in life, she married a soldier, someone who had served in the union army.

So we recognize her.

But in terms of her social economic well-being, she had to get trickle-down security. She had to get it based on her relationship with a man.

Now, we might think that we're beyond that right now.

But I'm just going to drop a moment to say, if you think that's over, look at my brother's keeper. If you think that's over, look at the ways that Moynihan still lives. If you think that's over, look at the way that our own former president says, actually, he was right.

If you think it's over, look at the ways in which even police misconduct even killing black men, has been framed as well -- if we could just get them a mentor, if we could just get them a summer internship -- this was the response of the -- the -- of the administration to the killing of black men and boys.

So when I think of the movement in the future -- when I think about the legacy of Combahee, I think about the future of which we can imagine Harriet Tubman gets recognized for the awesome person that she was, not because of a relationship, she happened to have, with man whose name we don't even know! That's what I'm talking about. When I'm talking about Combahee.

[APPLAUSE]

>> I just want to leave, the room with -- it's a formula that SONG we talk about how does movement building how does social change happen?

And one it starts with identity.

Who you are, who your people are, what's your ancestral memory? Who are your people right?

And that mixed with vision, what is the vision of the world that we are trying to see and create and build without a vision people perish that's what the good book says whatever but a VISION. We need that and consciousness. How are we -- what we believe in our consciousness our values right? And ultimately, how do we bring that forth in the work we do. You-all are probably like she really is on this work stuff. But it's important right and oftentimes I think this is where we get a little tripped up at and I've seen in different ways how folks get mad stuck on identity without no mention or you know what I mean folks get caught up



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unconsciousness but you don't know who your people are or folks when it comes down won't get your hand on a plow and get this work done. I think we need a combination of all of those things in order for real movement building for real social change to happen.

There's a combination of all of those things, so my hope is that folks take that, take all the things that have been said today. I took massive notes. So we could get this work done you-all and put our politics into practice.

>> Three things one join the Barbara Smith caring circle if you haven't joined we have lots of information. That speaks to what Kimberlé just shared around, like, how we actually -- we need to take care of each other. We know the state isn't going to take care of us and so join the Barbara Smith caring circle. No. 2:

BYP100 is my political home.

And I implore everyone to find what their political home and where that is.

Right? From various -- on the ground people -- join organizations, be in organizations, individualism, is -- is -- is a by-product of -- of not just liberalism it's a by-product of patriarchy and capitalism right?

Be an organization and No. 3, to just dig in deep specifically to the charge that you-all gave us because you-all doesn't write a statement that says as black women and as black lesbians we just believe this type of thing on its own. You outline things thoroughly there was rigor and great discipline shown through the statement in the work that you all did. It's for us to not sit in the fact that we are women that we are queer we are trans; that we are gender nonconformant and think that is enough. Our identities, yes, not enough for us to just have one -- this -- to hold this me as a black lesbian, what am I doing out these lived experiences? What are my political commitments? Because as liberal because we let each other slide you-all. We are afraid to have principled conversations with each other because we don't want to offend each other but just because I'm a lesbian doesn't mean I'm automatically radical it doesn't mean that I'm about the business of collective liberation.

I have to actually consciously take up that decision and that is what you-all have done and with the example that you have set for us. It is not enough for us to hold identity. It has to be intrinsically tied to our politics so thank you.

>> We've already had a conversation over here and you probably have Aunties and all that probably some more but you're going to get some more definitely your demeanor is talking about adoption.

[LAUGHTER]

>> She wants to adopt at this stage in life and we always have room for more.

We always have room for more, nieces and nephews.

So I just want to mention if you love Combahee, and you love this experience, there's a new book not even actually officially published.

How we get free by Keeanga Yamahtta Taylor. It's available in the exhibition area, it republishes, reprints the Combahee River Collective but it also has something very unique, which is interviews with the three



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coauthors that would be Beverly Smith Demita Frazier and me there are new interviews and also a wonderful I think it's called an afterward by Barbara Ransby which she just, like, lays it out and there's also an interview with Alicia Garza I would just like to direct you -- that's the one you should be using if you assign the Combahee River Collective statement for example, in your class or decide to read it in your study group.

That's all I have to say. Shameless plug. That's --

>> Excellent...

I'm going to plug something that I'm involved in and I just want to also this has been the most wonderful panel I've been on, recently.

[APPLAUSE]

>> Just -- I am.... I'm so proud of us, really.

This is what it looks like, when black women want to be deep in conversation about real things.

So, there you go. There's an example.

So I'm going to start a freedom school.

It's started, actually, November 27th.

Boston glass, which is gay -- I forget what it stands for, lesbian gay bisexual transgendered -- groups, people.

13 to 25.

We're going to start -- and I'm running the school freedom schools are not new. Freedom schools go back to the 19th century. Preceding the end of slavery.

It's a model that always works and you know it always works because people will try to burn it down or disrupt it so you know you're onto something the point of this freedom school is to develop critical thinking skills for young activists.

And we are going to be meeting for five sessions. We've got funding we're going to do a follow-up meeting to talk about it. I'm beyond excited. We're using all kinds of materials. I'm going to learn a lot as well as get a chance to teach. But the most important thing, Barbara, I owe you money freedom creation. This is what we're doing and to the point -- it was to your point, I'm adopting you.

One of the things that struggling with, with these young folk in this group is the feeling that they are feeling like they can rest sort of on the notion of identity.

I came out as trans, my work is done I've already fought a struggle and I'm done.

And, like, you know, yo, no. It only starts here because at some point in your life, the reality of all the other factors that impact how you are able to live in this world, are going to begin to hit you economic the material, all of those things.

Affected and tempered by your sexual and your gender identity but not the complete source of all the issues.

So I really, really -- I just echoing, watch for the freedom school we're hoping to cause all kinds of trouble and I'm hoping that we create synergy, intergenerational synergy, and an opportunity to really engender into young people, 13, 14, 15, 16 years old.

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A pathway, a blueprint, a way to analyze and think so that they can become the insurrectionists we need them to be.

[APPLAUSE]

>> So... one -- two things I'd like you to think about is, one, think about your purpose in life.

What you're on this planet to do. And the second, that do the social change work, the radical politics, because you love life.

And my last -- I want to make three pitches:

In the name of solidarity, and justice for Palestinian people, please sign that petition, that -- that was going around last night.

And if Leyla is here, she has the petitions.

The second thing, is speaking of folk schools, I'm on the board of directors of the highlander research and education center. Rosa parks, et cetera.

We're going to be starting a campaign, I'm going to be coordinating it -- called educators and librarians, for a new highlander library.

And I was thinking that, you know, let's say for example, if everybody in this room, found 10 other people to contribute, whatever they can, we can come up with the \$200,000.

So if you're interested, well, I'm going to contact you, whether you're interested or not.

[LAUGHTER]

>> Never mind. And then the -- the most important thing and the most relevant thing right now, is, Charlene mentioned this -- there is something wonderful that's being organized right now, now I hope Sheila is in the room and it's called the Barbara Smith caring circle.

You know, lifelong activists don't have great pensions and we want to make sure that whatever time they have left, to do the work, that you -- that you can do it.

You can do it in peace, in peace, and comfort. Right?

And so, just the way that you've given to the collective, to all of us in this room and to all the places you've been, right?

This has been created by Sheila. Is Sheila in this room? Yes -- and then want to just say -- I know just give me a -- okay.

So there are two things about this announcement that's important.

Barbara mentioned the book about the new book by -- about the Combahee.

The first -- let's say, first 15 donors, you get a free copy.

And maybe autographed, if you're lucky and the booth, for making your donations is booth 111, in the exhibition hall which is on the second floor of the Baltimore -- the Hilton hotel.

Okay?

So you all, go, make the contribution, because once you leave you know you're going to get busy and doing something else remember highlander and remember the petition.

[APPLAUSE]

>> So before I thank the panelists please go on scholars for social

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justice.com a new organization that Barbara Ransby and others in the room have founded Scholars for social justice.com. Let's thank these panelists....

[APPLAUSE]

(Concluded at 2:43 p.m.)